

THE WATSON FAMILY

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THE WATSON HOUSE

Ashley County Library

Hamburg, AR 71646

The Ashley County Museum or the Watson House is the family home of the David (Dave) Elijah Watson family. Located in Hamburg, Arkansas, at 300 N. Cherry Street, it was built in 1918. Until the tornado of 1979, it was set in a grove of large oak trees, which were planted by the original owner. The house is on a corner lot, and faces the Ashley County Courthouse, and the Hamburg City Hall to the west. Only two blocks from the downtown square, and two blocks from the old Senior High School on Lincoln Street. The house is a very impressive structure with its large white columns and vast porticos. In an area of smaller homes which surround the house, it is quite outstanding in size.

The original house on the property was bought by Fannie Mosley, daughter of William Rapp, who came to Ashley County from Windsborough, Louisiana. She was first married to Norman W. Trezevant, then to the Reverend Mosley, who was a Presbyterian minister. The house they bought belongs to a family by the name of Harris. Fannie owned the house and in turn willed it to her grandchildren, Floie Watson Sawyer, and Norman Trezevant Watson. They were minors when the present structure was built by their father, David Elijah Watson. David built the present house using the skill of a very noted cabinet-maker who lived in Hamburg, by the name of E. T. Johnson. In the time this house was built cabinet-makers made about \$1.25 per day while unskilled carpenters made about \$1.00 per day. The house was under construction for about one year, at a total cost of \$11,000.00. The house is two and one half stories high and has a basement. It contains ten rooms two large hallways and four baths. Lumber from the previous Mosley home was used in this structure, and comprised mostly all the beams and supports, which were of heart pine. There are four bedrooms upstairs, two baths and what was once a sleeping porch. The once open stairway is made of pine. The flooring was cut and hauled from McGehee, Arkansas, and is of edge-grain pine and oak. The huge columns were bought in West Virginia and shipped to Hamburg by rail. The columns were so long it took two freight cars to haul them. The upstairs floors are of the edge-grain pine and in 1963, when the house was refinished and renovated, the then owner, Norman Trezevant Watson found that they could not be commercially sanded. The original owner had the floors finished by hand plane. The ceilings are nine and one half feet high upstairs and ten and one half feet high down stairs. The roofing slate is the original and was badly damaged in the 1979 tornado, but has been replaced.

Heating was by coal furnace, located in the basement, but has now been converted to natural gas. One fireplace is located in the den and there was once a flue in the downstairs bedroom, which was the original kitchen, and a wood stove was used there. Now there are gas logs inserted into this original flue.

The entire block was once the property of the original Mosley-Watson owners and there was a large orchard behind the house, and a wind-mill which furnished water for the property at the time. There was also a small house built to the north of the house which housed Lula, a Negro maid, and who kept house for the Watson family for many years. This structure was torn down some years ago. The brick walk on the west side of the property was original to the first structure, the Mosley house, and is in very good repair today.

Col. Samuel Watson who was born in York County, S. C. , on November 28, 1731. He served in the Revolutionary War, and was a member of the Provincial Congress in 1776. John Watson, born 1770, died 1830, was the father of Elijah David Watson. John married in 1815 to Nancy Holt, born 1791, died 1857. Elijah David, born 1820, died 1893, married in 1859 to Sara Margaret White, born 1836, died 1898. David Elijah Watson was their son.

Elijah David Watson was a farmer, and came by wagon train from North Carolina in 1864 to Ashley County, Arkansas. One son was born on the way. The next year he started his hardware business in Hamburg, which until recently was in the same location. The Watson Hardware saw the fourth generation of Watsons' as owners. David Elijah Watson, born 1867, took over the business at his fathers death, then in turn it went to Norman Trezevant Watson, and then to Norman Trezevant (Trezy) Watson Jr., who sold the business building to the Ashley Life Insurance Co. of Hamburg, Arkansas.

Elijah David Watson owned some farm land in the Mississippi delta between Portland and Parkdale, in Ashley County, and in addition to his hardware business he had a "furnishing" business for the local farmers. David Elijah Watson also had farm land in Ashley County, and had a cattle business as well.

David Elijah Watson married George Trezevant, born March 8, 1872. They were married in 1896, and lived in one of the two houses that was on the Mosley lot, (where the Watson Home now stands). Dave's wife George was never a healthy woman, but she managed to see that her children Floie Watson Sawyer and Norman Trezevant had a good schooling, and helped them with their studies from her sick bed. She had tuberculosis and in later years went to Pheoniz, Arizona and stayed on an Indian Reservation for her health. She died in 1910, at the age of 39. During her years of better health, she drew the plans for the Presbyterian Church, in Hamburg, which is only one block south from the Watson Home. The family were all members of this church in its earlier years. Aside from being faithful workers in the church, the Watson men, have always been active in the community. Mr. "Dave", was on the board of directors for the "Food Administration, during World War 1, member of the board of directors for the Hamburg Bank, member of the Chamber of Commerce and took part in active politics. Formal education for Mr. "Dave" was going to school at the Academy in Hamburg, then later attending Vanderbilt, in Nashville, Tennessee. Norman Trezevant Watson also attended school in Hamburg, then went to Tennessee Military Academy in Sweetwater, Tennessee. The last owner of the Watson Home, was Norman Trezevant (Trezy) Watson, son of Norman Trezevant Watson Sr.. Trezy attended Hamburg High School and graduated in 1947, then went to ROTC. He enlisted in the Army and retired a Lt. Col. in 1975. At this time he returned to Hamburg to take over the Watson Hardware business, and to live in the Watson Home. He is married and he and his wife Sue, and their four children call Hamburg home now.

Norman Trezevant Watson Sr. married Agnes Dew and they made thier home in the Watson Home for many years, and raised their family there. They have a daughter Sara Lee, born 1935, who lives in McGehee, Arkansas with her husband and family, in addition to their oldest child Norman Trezevant (Trezy) Watson Jr. The Trezevant Watson Srs' also live in Hamburg on West Parker Street, which they now call home.